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**Early Learning & Children's  
Services Committee**

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**HB 2112**

**Brief Description:** Clarifying the definition of social worker.

**Sponsors:** Representative Pettigrew.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates a third classification of social worker for purposes of licensing by the Department of Health and the application of the Uniform Disciplinary Act.
- Revises the definition of social worker for the purpose of the protection of patients in state hospitals for the mentally ill.

**Hearing Date:** 2/27/07

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

The Department of Health (DOH) licenses numerous health and health-related occupations. Licensing by the DOH typically includes a definition of the occupation and specified criteria in the areas of experience and/or education. Health and health-related professions licensed by the DOH are subject to the Uniform Disciplinary Act (UDA) for unlicensed practice and for complaints alleging a violation of standards of practice of the profession.

Current licensure of social workers is limited to two classifications:

- (1) "independent clinical social worker" with a master's or doctorate level degree and the authority to independently diagnose and treat emotional and mental disorders; and
- (2) "advanced social worker" with a master's or doctorate level degree but who practices under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker until completion of the requisite 3,200 hours of supervised practice.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

For the purposes of preventing and reporting abuse of patients in state hospitals for the care of the mentally ill, a "social worker" is defined as "anyone engaged in a professional capacity during the regular course of employment in encouraging or promoting the health, welfare, support, or education of patients, or providing social services to patients, whether in an individual capacity or as an employee or agent of any public or private organization or institution."

**Summary of Bill:**

A definition of "social worker" is established for the purpose of DOH licensure and application of the UDA. To be licensed as a social worker, a person must have earned a bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree from an accredited social work educational program. "Social worker" includes persons currently licensed as clinical social workers and advanced clinical social workers.

The definition of social worker in the abuse of patients statute is revised to be consistent with the definition for licensure by DOH and application of the UDA.

Beginning January 1, 2008, public and private agencies may not use the term "social worker" for volunteers or employees unless such persons meet the qualifications to be a licensed social worker.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.